

**COLLECTING IN THE FAR NORTH.****I.—THE ALASKAN COAST.**

By H. F. WICKHAM, Iowa City, Iowa.

By request of the Editor of ENT. NEWS I place before the reader some account of a Summer trip to Alaska and that part of British Columbia lying back of it drained by the Stikine (or Stikeen) River. Although some parts of the territory are quite easy of access, the distance from all centres of trade and ordinary routes of travel have combined with the general ideas as to climate and the unattractiveness of the insect fauna, to keep entomologists from visiting them—consequently comparatively little has been done to increase our knowledge in this direction since the time of the Russian explorations. The following notes are intended simply to convey an idea as to the general character of the places visited from an entomological standpoint, but by the kindness of Dr. Horn, in giving his aid in identifying beetles, the correctness of what is placed on record relating to the Coleoptera is secured. A complete list of these insects is in preparation, and will be presented at as early a date as practicable, so that any indefiniteness of specification in this paper will be remedied.

Leaving Tacoma about the middle of June, a run of four days brought me to the first stopping-place in Alaska—the Yes Bay cannery—and as the steamer was to remain a few hours unloading freight, I went ashore to get some insects if possible. The rugged surface of the land with its heavy growth of conifers and thickets of blueberry intermixed with a vile plant known as the “devil’s club” (*Fatsia horrida*) is not conducive to either ease or comfort while collecting, and the excessive dampness forms still another drawback. The ground is covered everywhere with a luxuriant carpet of moss, often many inches deep, into which the feet sink at every step. But little was found here, only a half dozen *Pterostichus castaneus*, a few Staphylinidæ, twenty or thirty little moths, a fly or two and a couple of Hymenoptera. The moths were flying around the flowers of the devil’s club,” and before I had taken all the whistle of the steamer called me back. Shortly after we touched at the Loring cannery, where I took nothing but one or two Scolytidæ flying around newly-cut timber.

Early the next morning we were running along the shore of Wrangel Island, which lies close to the mainland of Alaska, the

upper end being directly opposite the mouth of the Stikine River. On the seaward side, only a very few miles from the river mouth, the town of Fort Wrangel lies on a narrow strip of beach, backed by high hills covered with the usual conifers and blueberry undergrowth; close to the beach this growth is replaced by thickets of salmon-berry and thimble-berry, the fruit of both being used as food by the native and white residents, but supporting little in the way of insect life. The great nettles, taller than a man, which are plentiful in these thickets, make the task of forcing a way through them or searching the ground anything but pleasant. However, I expected to make this place my base of operations for some weeks, and so made preparations accordingly.

Investigation showed the insect fauna of the island to be by no means varied, and to present nothing remarkable as compared with other points in the North Pacific. A number of Carabidæ may be taken, mostly along the edge of the beach, just above high-tide mark; among them may be mentioned *Cychrus angusticollis*, *C. marginatus*, *Loricera 10-punctata*, *Nebria* sp., *Pterostichus crenicollis*, *P. vitreus*, *P. riparius*, *Bembidium funereum*, *B. flavopictum*, *B. cautum*, *Patrobus septentrionis*, *P. aterrimus*, *Platynus erasus* and *Amara littoralis*. Of the Dytiscidæ only an *Agabus* and a few specimens of *Hydroporus oblitus* were found, and these not in water, but under stones or pieces of wood in very wet places—the use of a net in pools and streams yielding nothing. Search under seaweed and other débris cast up by the sea proved much less productive than I had anticipated, very little except a few Staphylinidæ being taken here. *Trichopteryx parallela* and a species of *Ptenidium* were found sparingly under logs and chips, while *Cryptohypnus musculus* occurred in some numbers under the shingle.

Just within and along the outskirts of the brush, *Athous ferruginosus* is seen quite commonly, flying where footsteps disturb the quiet of the spot. On rolling over sticks or small logs here, which were deeply imbedded in moss and much overgrown with grass, these insects would fly around in numbers, alighting on my clothes and very easily captured—they often came from resting places near or upon the ground, running up the stems of plants until a good place was reached from which to take wing, when they would let go and fly slowly around the spot, something after the manner in which *Myodites* may be seen about golden-rods in

the States during Autumn. Occasionally *Podabrus piniphilus* may be found in the same localities as the *Athous*, but not in such large numbers. Far back in the woods but little can be found, except *Pterostichus castaneus*, and this only in small numbers, the growth of moss being so rank as to greatly obstruct search, and by it any logs that may chance to lie on the ground are soon bound down so lightly as to defy efforts to move them. *Aphodius aleutus* occurred once or twice in the first, also an *Eros* of a species not yet determined.

Experience proved it more profitable to set traps for certain kinds of beetles rather than to go after them in their almost inaccessible haunts. With an eye, therefore, to the capture of such species as live in carrion, I piled up a great heap of carcasses of birds in a little thicket a few feet from my cabin-door, every day looking them over carefully and sifting the soil on which they lay, that nothing might escape. The results were far above what I had hoped, numerous species of Staphylinidæ being thus obtained in large numbers, also many *Cercyon fulvipennis*, some *C. adumbratum*, *Choleva egena*, *Ptilium columbianum*, and occasionally other Trichopterygidæ. Taking into account the seeming dearth of Coleopterous life on the island, the number of specimens taken in this way was really surprising.

Little in the way of wood- or leaf-eating beetles was seen on the island, though careful search was made for them. A couple of specimens of *Opsimus quadrilineatus* were found, one of them under the wharf at Wrangel, the other resting on a fence, and a single dead *Phymatodes* was taken on a window. Not a single Chrysomelid was secured, and beating trees yielded only two specimens of a *Magdalis*. Two Hylobiini were taken from low sprouts. But little can be said of the insect fauna of the place as regards the other orders. Hymenoptera were scarce, Lepidoptera by no means common, and Diptera numerous only in individuals. A large species of Dragon-fly was the chief representative of the Neuroptera, while of Orthoptera there seemed to be a total lack. The few Hymenoptera that were taken were mostly Humble-bees, captured around the blossoms of white clover.

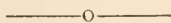
Having spent several days on the island I determined to make a trip to the mainland, and engaged, for the purpose, a white trapper and an Alaskan Indian, intending to send them after mammals while I employed my own time collecting insects. We

left Fort Wrangel early one morning, and about half past four next afternoon reached our destination—about twenty-five miles from Fort Wrangel—which was to be my stopping place for two days. Next morning I sent my men across the bay with instructions to ascend the snow-capped mountains opposite, in search of the mountain goat, and to bring back any insects that they might come across. Then, as it was raining and all vegetation was soaked, I could do little but turn over a few logs along the beach and search under seaweed for Staphylinidæ. I was rewarded by finding a *Liparocephalus*, but took little else, and filled out the day by skinning birds shot on the way down.

The night passed without interruption, except that caused by the cries of a captive baby seal which we had placed in a pen back of the camp—cries of the most homesick intonation, calculated to melt the heart even of an entomologist without babies of his own. Morning dawned clear at last and promised a good day for collecting, so I lost no time in getting out and to work, with better success in some directions than on the island. By beating I took a few *Syneta simplex*, *Corymbites caricinus*, *C. tarsalis* and *Anaspis rufa*. A number of *Anthobiids* were found and one or two examples each of *Leptalia macilenta* and *Pachyta monticola*, but this was about all of the beetles, the remainder of the catch consisting of flies, moths and a few Hymenoptera. Midges and mosquitoes were an almost intolerable nuisance, and it was quite a relief to get back to the cabin, build a "smudge" and look over the day's catch. In the evening my men came back without the goat, though they had shot one away up towards the summit of the mountain and found the difficulties in bringing down the skin and necessary parts of the skeleton so great that the attempt was abandoned. However, they brought down a *Donacia*, which they had found in a snow-bank at a considerable altitude, an *Eros* and a *Rhyncholus*, all of interest from the locality in which they were taken. Both men were so weary that they said they were too tired to pick up any of the "bugs" they came across on the way down. Our return trip took us only a single day, and next day I was on hand to resume my entomological labors at Fort Wrangel.

Leaving the Stikine River country for discussion in another paper, but two points remain to be spoken of—Hunter's Bay on Prince of Wales Island (if we may rely on the information as to

locality given by officers of the steamer), and Metlakahtla or Port Chester, a large Indian settlement under direction of a missionary. At Hunter's Bay a few hours were spent with fair success, the same general character of country obtaining as in other places spoken of though some of the species of beetles were not found elsewhere. *Pterostichus castaneus*, *P. amethystinus*, *Epuræa truncatella*, a fine Byrrhide, *Pedilophorus acuminatus*, a Scydmenid of considerable size, and a number of *Xyloterus bivittatus* were seen. At Metlakahtla the rain again interfered, but a few other species were added to my list, among them *Pterostichus validus* and *Megapenthes stigmatosus*. All of the narrow coast strip as well as the islands which constitute southern Alaska consists of rocky and rugged hills with very little variety of soil or vegetation, so that an entomologist would hardly expect to find a great variety of species. Every spot seems, however, to yield something not found at others, and doubtless much that is new yet remains to be discovered. The difficulties of exploration have rendered anything more than a superficial examination out of the question, except in isolated localities, and the day is yet far distant when we shall be able to say that our knowledge of the Alaskan insect fauna approaches completeness.



### Notes on the COCCINELLIDÆ observed in San Diego Co., Cal.

By F. E. BLAISDELL, M.D.

*Anisosticta seriata* Melsh.—Plentiful in September. Occurring along the bay-shore in favorable localities. Large numbers are on the wing during warm sunny days; when at rest, clustered in the tops of small shrubs and in the ice-plant (*Mesembryanthemum crystallinum*).

*Megilla maculata* DeG.—Rare. Occurs in the eastern portion of the country, along the Colorado River.

*Megilla vittigera* Mann.—Quite plentiful in Summer on sedges along water courses.

*Hippodamia ambigua* Lec.—Common everywhere.

*Hippodamia convergens*.—Guér.—Abundant. Interbreeds with the preceding species; both congregating during the colder months of the year under bark on trees, and in the dead leaves